

6505
TWO

PRACTICAL SERMONS

ON

PRIVATE PRAYER

AND

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A SHORT ADDRESS

ON THE PROPER MANNER OF EMPLOYING
THE LORD'S DAY.

By J. CHARLESWORTH, M. A.

LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

NEWARK:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY ALLIN AND RIDGE:

SOLD ALSO BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD,
AND G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER ROW,
LONDON. MDCCXCI.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

249

TWO

PRACICAL SERMONS

ON

PRIVATE PRAYER

AND

PUBLIC WORSHIP.



A SHORT ADDRESS

ON THE PROPER MANNER OF EMPLOYING
THE LORD'S DAY.

BY J. CHARLESWORTH, M.A.

LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

NEWARK:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY ALLEN AND TICE:
AND ALSO BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,
AND C. G. LANE, L. ROBINSON, WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON.
MDCCLXII.

PRICE SIXPENCE.



PSALM cxlviii, 18.

The Lord is nigh unto all them, that call upon Him; yea all such, as call upon Him faithfully. He will fulfil the Desire of them, that fear Him. He also will hear their Cry, and will help them.

DESIRABLE and important as the Privilege is of applying to our heavenly Father for that Help, whereof we stand in Need, yet it is by many Persons as much disregarded, as if they accounted themselves at all Times sufficient for their own Happiness. Even amongst those, who are willing to comply with the outward Form of Prayer, there is Reason to believe that a great Part have never duly considered in what Manner it ought to be performed, to make it acceptable to God.

Some Persons persuade themselves that they are worthy Performers of this Duty, merely because they are regular and constant in repeating a Set of Prayers and Praises: although they never think of honouring God by a consistent Conduct in Life;—never strive to correct their Faults; nor make any laudable Resistance to those Temptations, which beset them. And some lose all, or most, of the good Effects of Prayer, by an inconsiderate Habit of praying to God without any suitable Preparation of Mind,—without due Reflection upon the important Nature of those things, for which they pray to Him, and frequently without any earnest Desire to obtain their Petition.

Sincerity is the Life of Prayer. It is that, which makes it an Act of true Devotion and Homage to almighty God. And this Virtue we may be sure we possess in a good Degree, if we are daily endeavouring to improve the Temper and Disposition of our Hearts, and to purify ourselves from all Iniquity. To

To Sincerity we must add Humility. We ought to acknowledge not only our Wants both temporal and spiritual, together with our absolute Dependency on God's Favour, but also our Unworthiness to have those Wants supplied. The Man, who is too proud to confess his Wants, will be too proud also to acknowledge the Hand, by which he is relieved. And the *spiritually proud*, (he, who is puffed up with a high Opinion of his own Sanctity,) will impute all the Help he receives, not to God's bountiful Kindness and tender Compassion, but to his own extraordinary Merit. Instead of applying to the Throne of Grace with comfortable Hope, arising from a Sense of God's Goodness and Mercy towards the Sons of Men, he will come rashly, as with the Claim of Justice: although in Truth *no Man living is justified in the Sight of God*. An Increase of Humility, and more perfect Submission to the Will of God, are very proper and necessary to be made the frequent Subject of our Prayers.

To these Qualifications must be added a real Belief and Trust in the Goodness of the Almighty: that is, “a firm Persuasion that
 “we shall certainly obtain what we ask for,
 “if it be expedient for us.”

Upon the first Apprehension of God,—upon considering His exalted Character, His Purity and Perfection, we might naturally be more inclined to fear and despair, than to form any Hope of His Favour. He is not only *the most high God over all the Earth*, but *His Majesty is above the Heavens*. He is *holy, just, and good*; His Nature is *pure, and perfect*. *We*, on the contrary, are stained with the foul Corruption of *Sin*. But, when we are made acquainted that He is a God of Mercy and Compassion;—that He so loved Mankind, as to send His Son into the World, *to die for them*;—that He hath commanded us to pray to Him, and hath promised to grant our humble Petitions; the discouraging Fear immediately subsides; and a joyful Hope arises in its Place,—a Hope
 of

of being heard, relieved, and blessed. We then perceive that “not to pray to God” is to disobey His Will; and “not to believe” that our Prayers shall be granted” is to deny His Truth and Goodness. Still we must be careful that our Confidence do not so far exalt itself, as to overthrow our Humility, and hurry us into Presumption. Nothing is more acceptable to God than *Humility*: as we are repeatedly told in various Parts of the holy Scriptures. In the Book of the Prophet Isaiah it is written, *Thus saith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is holy; “I dwell in “the high and holy place, with him also, “that is of a contrite Spirit; to revive the “Spirit of the humble, and to revive the “Heart of the contrite ones.*

The earnest and fervent Prayer of a righteous Man (saith St. James) availeth much. Great Caution however is requisite, that the Fervency of our Devotion may be such, as true Religion authorises. It should be a

pure and steady Flame; not a headstrong enthusiastic Fire. We must pray (as St. Paul saith) *with the Spirit, and with the Understanding also.* Our Devotion, if it be such as it ought to be, will manifest itself in its good Effects. It will certainly promote an Increase of Humility, joined with a rational Trust and Dependence on God. It will make us truly contented with our Condition; and more and more fruitful in *the Works of Righteousness: the Effect of which* (as the Prophet saith) *is Quietness and Assurance for ever.*

Pleasure, Honour, and Profit, are the three great Idols, before which the Men of the World *fall down and worship.* They love *the World,* and wish to have as large a Share as possible of its enchanting Treasures. They applaud their own Wisdom and Prudence, whilst the Day of their Prosperity endureth; and are disposed to say, "*Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?*" and, *what Profit shall we have, if we pray*
unto

“unto Him? They affect to look down with Contempt on those, who acknowledge the wise and good Providence of God, and trust their Happiness in His Hands: little suspecting that they, *who love and honour God, and humbly pray to Him*, have by much the fairest Prospect of Happiness in the present World: besides the important Consideration, that *they*, (and they only) are sure to find Support and Comfort *in the Time of Affliction, and at the Hour of Death*.

To those, whose Hearts are fixed on worldly Gain, or Pride, or sensual Indulgence, it may be in vain to represent the happy State of Mind, which habitual Devotion produces. In like Manner as the mean and selfish neither know nor can conceive the heartfelt Joy, which the humane and generous experience, so to those, who are void of a religious Temper, the delightful Affection of *Gratitude towards God* appears as “a Word without a Meaning.” Nevertheless the open-hearted, kind, and liberal, (that
is)

is) they, who are truly desirous of promoting their Neighbours' Happiness, feel an Enlargement, and a Capacity of Pleasure, which they would not exchange for all the Treasures of the Earth. And the Man of true Devotion finds increasing Peace, Content, and Joy, *in believing*; and an Elevation of Heart and Spirit, which becomes the happiest Security against the various Temptations of the World, and *prepares him for the pure and perfect Joys of the heavenly State.*

How trifling and contemptible are all the Distinctions of worldly Honour, compared with this one Privilege, which the poorest Man on Earth enjoys, who is sincere and faithful in God's Service! To enjoy the Intimacy and Friendship of a powerful Monarch; to be admitted to his Presence at all Times; to have the Liberty of presenting our Petitions, and be assured of Success; is deservedly esteemed a great Honour. But how much greater is it to possess the Friendship of *the King of Kings, the absolute Governor*

ernor and Disposer of all Things!—to have Access to *Him* at all Times!—not only to be allowed to ask for Help and Comfort in Distress, but to be assured of receiving the best Relief, namely, Strength to uphold our Patience, and in due Time a happy Release from every Pain and Sorrow; together with a plenteous Recompence for our meek and patient Waiting: a Recompence not proportioned to *our* small Deservings, but to the Greatness and Goodness of that *Master*, whom we have served.

If those Benefits and Blessings only, which are of a temporal Nature, depended on a proper Exercise of the Duty of Prayer, surely it ought to be accounted a very valuable Privilege, to be permitted to apply for Health, and Strength, and Comfort, and Refreshment, to *Him*, whose *Power* as far exceedeth the utmost Extent of all human Help, as *His Goodness and loving Kindness* excel the scanty Benevolence of the Sons of Men. But, when we consider that spiritual Blessings

ings also are promised to the sincere and humble Petitioner ;—that the Almighty hath promised *to give His holy Spirit to them, who ask it*, (that they may be enabled both to know and do His holy Will) this adds such Importance to the Duty of Prayer, as plainly shows that we are our own worst Enemies, if we are so foolish and presumptuous as to neglect it.

To conclude. —The diligent Use of Prayer naturally forms our Minds to a right Apprehension both of God and ourselves. It sets before us the admirable Perfections of the Deity; and at the same Time shews us our happy Interest therein. It reminds us of His unspeakable Greatness and Goodness; His Compassion, and tender Mercy. It awakens us to a Sense of our own Imperfections, and of the Wisdom and Goodness of God's providential Government. In short it teaches us *to set the Lord always before us*; it helps us to raise our Affections above the World; and is greatly instrumental in determining

mining us to exert ourselves in earnest Endeavours to improve the Disposition of our Hearts, and conform our Thoughts and Actions more and more to the blessed Will of God. If we live in the wilful Neglect of this Duty, (though we know that God Himself hath commanded us to pray to Him) —if, whilst we cannot but be sensible that we stand continually in Need of His Protection and Support, we still resolve to live *as without God in the World*, such Presumption must certainly expose us to the Danger of being forsaken by our heavenly Father, and given up to a reprobate Mind and a hardened Heart. On the contrary, if we are steady and constant in the due Performance of Prayer and Thanksgiving to our most gracious Benefactor, —to Him, *who daily poureth His Benefits upon us*, we shall find *sincere Devotion* to be the most effectual Support of our Virtue in all Trials, and the most refreshing Rest and Comfort of our Souls in the toilsome Journey of Life. It will calm the Passions, regulate the Thoughts,

and

and preserve the Heart and Affections from the chief Disturbances of human Life. It will supply us with both Strength and Courage in the worst of Dangers. It will afford us Safety in Prosperity, and Patience in Adversity. It is a Sanctuary ever open to the unhappy. It is *as a Place to flee unto; a Refuge from the Storm and Tempest.* Tho' all other Friends forsake us, still God is near us. He is the ever present Help in Trouble. Of His Friendship and Favour no Enemy can deprive us. No Power can intercept His gracious Communications. In His holy Comfort we may rejoice and fear not. —Wherefore let us say (with the devout Psalmist) *May the Words of my Mouth and the Meditations of my Heart be always acceptable in thy Sight, O Lord my Strength and my Redeemer.*

DEUTERONOMY v. 20. 12

Keep the Sabbath Day, to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded.

THE original Design of the holy Sabbath was, to preserve the Knowledge of the one true God, the Creator of the World. And there can be no Doubt of its being further intended by the good Providence of God as an Opportunity and an Admonition to Mankind to employ themselves in such devout Exercises and Contemplations, as might incline them to serve Him truly, and obey all His Commandments. The public Worship of the Almighty is a Duty most proper and seasonable on this Day. And it ought to be considered not only as a natural Homage to the great and good Father of Mankind, but also the principal Means of promoting a general Sense of Religion. It

is

is the Means of preserving some Remembrance of God even in the Minds of those, who have no Disposition themselves to *hallow the Lord's Sabbath*;—who are so far from devoutly acknowledging the universal Parent, from whom they receive *Life and Health and all Things*, that they seem desirous of banishing Him intirely from their Thoughts.

* Immediately after our Saviour's Resurrection, which came to pass on the *first Day of the Week*, it appears that the first Day was by the Authority of the Apostles substituted in the Place of the seventh. And from that Time to this it hath been constantly set apart for the public Worship of God by the whole Christian Church. Whatever Difference of Opinion there may have been in other Respects, in *this* all Parties Sects and Denominations of Christians have invariably agreed. By which Means it comes to pass that several Millions of People,

* Bishop Porteus.

ple, in various Regions of the Earth, are at one and the same Time engaged in prostrating themselves before the Throne of Grace, and offering up their Sacrifice of Prayer Thanksgiving and Praise to the common Father of all, *in whom we live, and move, and have our Being.**

*There is in this View of *the Lord's Day* something so truly magnificent and awful, that one would naturally expect it to strike the Attention of every Mind, and powerfully excite an Inclination to join in the grand Assembly of Christians, and to take Part in a Solemnity thus expressive of the Honour due to the heavenly King. That they, who avow an open Contempt of all Religion, and profess to live *as without God in the World*, without any Belief of such a Being, or at least without any Regard to His providential Government; — that these should think it a very unnecessary Waste of Time to attend the public Service of the
B Church

* Bishop Porteus.

Church, can be no Wonder. But that any, who profess to believe in a God of infinite Wisdom and almighty Power, who extendeth His providential Care to all the Inhabitants of the Earth, who hath commanded us to pray to Him both in public and private, and who hath declared that *them, who honour Him, He will honour*;—that such Persons should either totally disregard the Sabbath, or but rarely attend the public Worship of God on His holy Day, is such an Inconsistency of Conduct, as cannot be too seriously reprehended. Sometimes the most trivial Pretences of Inconvenience or Indisposition, (in short) such little Matters, as are never suffered to interfere with their worldly Engagements, are accounted sufficient to justify Men in setting aside this important Call of Duty, and refusing *to honour God in the Sight of each other*. Whenever this Indifference is seen to prevail amongst Persons, whose superiour Advantages of Education ought to have enlarged their Minds, and furnished them with the best Principles

Principles to direct their Conduct, very unhappy Effects will follow. For their Example is conspicuous, and has a very extensive Influence on public Manners.* And, wherever the Neglect of the Sabbath becomes prevalent, there will soon be an increasing Corruption both of Principles and Practice.

As to those, who make worldly Business their Excuse, and plead the Want of Time to attend upon God *in the House of Prayer*, I would ask them, whether it is not to the favourable Kindness of the Almighty that they owe their Life, their Health, and all their Faculties, together with every Opportunity of providing for themselves or their Families. And shall they, whose Continuance in Life depends intirely on His Pleasure, presume to say “they will not honour “God with the dutiful Tribute of a small Proportion of their Time?”—If Gratitude has lost its Hold upon them; and the Love

B 2 of

* Bishop Porteus.

of God's Laws, which are *holy just and good*, lies buried in the Selfishness of a proud or worldly Heart, natural Fear might well induce them to humble themselves before that awful Sovereign, on whom they are dependent for every Blessing they can enjoy, and without whose kind Support it is impossible their Lives should be prolonged a single Moment.

Let no one flatter himself with the Imagination, that, because his own Improvement (as he supposes) is not much concerned in the public Institutions of Religion, he may therefore be at Liberty to with-hold his Attendance, and to forbear joining in the Congregation of God's People. For it is the indispensable Duty of every one, as a Christian Member of Society, to promote, both by his example, and by whatever Influence he may have, "a regular and steady Observance of those Institutions," on Account of their great Importance to the Virtue and Happiness of Mankind, and the fatal Consequences,

sequences, that must inevitably flow from a general Disregard of them.

Many Persons are so deeply immersed in Business or Pleasure, that they seldom turn their Thoughts to God; seldom recollect either their Obligations to Him, or their Dependence on His Favour, except when they are led to it by the stated Returns of public Worship. Some are so unhappily hardened, as to refuse ever joining with their Fellow Christians to honour God *in the solemn Assembly*. But a much greater Number are swayed by the Power of Custom; and yield to the Rules of Decency, though little influenced by any Sense of Duty. Now amongst these there are probably none, who do not receive a temporary Impression of Religion: which though it works not its due Effect, though it may be soon overpowered by the Cares or Pleasures of the World, still it contributes to prevent the Mind being swallowed up in a total Degeneracy. And some will be happily surpris'd into a strong

and lasting Sense of Religion: their Hearts being either moved to sympathize with the Devotion of their Christian Brethren thus gathered together in Honour of their Creator, or else penetrated by *the searching Power of God's Word*. By these Means they, who come to Church only at the Call of general Custom, or even by Constraint, may depart with the most useful Impression upon their Minds: being awakened from their Lethargy, and induced to listen to the warning Voice, which bids them return to the right Way and walk therein.

Many Advantages of the most important Nature will be found to arise from a regular Attendance on public Worship. At the same Time that it impresses upon our Minds a strong and clear Apprehension of the Obedience due to God, it greatly contributes to awaken in our Hearts a sincere Love of our Neighbour, and a lively Feeling of all the social Duties; and to unite Men in the mutual Exercise of Friendliness and Charity.

When

When we meet together in Order to acknowledge and adore the great Creator, *the Author and Giver of all Good*, to offer up our united Supplications for His Help and Favour, and our united Thanksgiving for His Goodness and Mercy towards us; to pray earnestly for the Blessing of God upon each other and upon all Mankind; to express our Trust in Him as our common Friend and Protector, and our Hope of living together hereafter in the everlasting Kingdom of our heavenly Father; we naturally appear to each other in such a Light, as tends to excite and cherish every humane and tender Affection. Whilst we are thus assembled together in Honour of God, and our Minds engaged in the Contemplation of a future State, every uncharitable Disposition stands corrected; every jarring Passion is composed; mutual Competitions of Interest disappear; and the invidious Distinctions of this World are for a Time forgotten. We stand together on a perfect Level, as *Fellow-servants of one great Master*: all having the same

important Object of Desire and Hope; the same Obligations to acknowledge; the same Protection Help and Mercy to implore.

The viewing of each other in this affecting Light must certainly contribute to soften and improve the Heart; and will be greatly instrumental in *exciting us to Love and to good Works.*

The public Worship of God, when performed with true Devotion, leaves such an Impression upon our Minds of the vast Importance of the Life to come, of our indispensable Obligation to serve and obey God, of our absolute Dependence on His Providence for Protection Help and Comfort, and of His unspeakable Goodness to those, *who love Him, and keep His Commandments,* as becomes a Guard and Support to our Virtue in the Course of the Week. It will contribute to our Proficiency in the happy *Art of being contented with our Condition in Life, whatever it may be.* And there are few Temptations, that can approach to
hurt

hurt us, so long as we possess a *contented Mind*.

Instead of murmuring and repining, we ought to be truly thankful that we are thus required at stated Periods to unbend our Minds from the fatiguing Cares of Life, and remit our own Exertions, in acknowledgment of *His* providential Care, without whose *Blessing* our utmost Industry cannot avail us. For too close an Application to Labour, either of Mind or Body, is not only painful, but very hurtful to the Constitution. Add to this the Comfort and Satisfaction of being assured, that, when our honest Industry is not crowned with the Success we hoped for, we still have a powerful Friend, who will in due Time supply all our Wants, and amply recompence every Suffering: provided that we *possess our Souls in Patience*. Moreover a benevolent Heart will rejoice in the merciful Plan of this Day: whereby a comfortable Relaxation is provided for the labouring Poor; and also an Opportunity of
being

being instructed in the Knowledge of that God, whose Friendship is infinitely more valuable than all the Treasures of the World. and who hath Himself declared *that He regardeth not the rich more than the poor.*

If the public Worship of God be indeed a Duty of so extensive Usefulness and Importance, as hath been described, no Man can live in the Neglect of it, nor be in any Way instrumental to other Persons neglecting it, without the Guilt of very great Immorality.

We are warned in the holy Scripture *not to be Partakers of other Men's Sins:* that is, not to countenance and encourage others in the Transgression of God's Laws. If we are guilty of doing this, it may hereafter become one of the heaviest Burdens upon our Conscience. On the other Hand, if our sincere Love of God and of our Neighbour makes us ready to embrace every Opportunity of *paying to God the Honour due,* and zealous to promote, as far as our Influence extends, a chearful Submission to His holy Will,

Will, and a just Reverence of all his Laws, we are encouraged to expect Blessings and Rewards of the most valuable Kind: not proportioned to our small Deserving, but to the Greatness and Goodness of that Master, whom we serve. Thus saith the Prophet Daniel, *They, that be wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they, who turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever.*

God is a Spirit (saith our Saviour) *and they, that worship Him, must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth:* that is, “with the devout Affection of the Heart.” Our Prayers, and Praises must proceed from a Heart truly disposed to serve and obey the God, whom we profess to worship and honour. If there be not this Correspondence between the Heart and Lips, when we come to the House of God:—if we are fully bent on retaining our favourite Vices, and are only willing to sacrifice to the Almighty *that, which costs us nothing*; what can such Worship

ship

ship be accounted, but presumptuous Mockery at least, if not Hypocrisy.

All outward Acts of Worship are required to be expressive of inward Piety, at the same Time that they are designed to be instrumental to our further Edification. Therefore, unless we are sincerely desirous of improving in our Obedience to God, at the best we only *deceive ourselves*. But, if we are resolutely determined against growing better, our pretended Worship must be not only unacceptable, but highly displeasing to our heavenly Father. *Who so turneth his Ear from bearing the Law, (saith Solomon) even his Prayer shall be Abomination.*

To conclude.—If there be any Weight of Argument in what hath been said, let me entreat you to consider, how much it is your bounden Duty, as Men and Christians, to be steady and constant in attending *the House of Prayer*. Are you unwilling to be reminded of the gracious Providence of
God:

God: who is continually watching over us *for our Good*, and guiding us in “the sure
 “*Road to Happiness*,” so long as we are
 humble enough to submit to the Regulations of *His Wisdom*? I’m afraid it is the
 unhappy Case of some amongst you, that
 you are engaged in such a Course of Life, as
 the Word of God condemns;—habituated
 to some favourite Vice; or attached to some
 worldly Pursuit in such a Manner, as you
 know to be inconsistent with the Principles
 of Christianity. Therefore you avoid that
 Place, where your Duty would be held up
 to your View, and your Transgressions
 brought home to your Consciences.—
 Thus with desperate Folly and Ingratitude
 you allow your Sins *to separate you from your
 God*.—In some Persons the Neglect of the
 holy Sabbath appears to arise more from a
 Habit of Thoughtlessness, and the Example
 of their Neighbours, than from any other
 Cause. These ought to be admonished,
 that Carelessness and Inattention to *God’s
 Laws*

Laws will not stand excused at the Day of Judgment; nor will the Plea of general Custom be admitted as an Extenuation either of this or any other Transgression. The more general is the Neglect of any Duty, the greater is our Obligation to show a laudable Example, and contribute our Part towards encouraging and promoting the Observance of it. In short be only so fair to yourselves as to view the Matter in its true Light. And then, instead of considering the Sabbath as a painful Burden, or an unwelcome Encroachment upon your Time, you will account it *a heavenly Blessing*, fraught with Comfort Peace and Joy, and worthy of Him, from whom cometh *every good and perfect Gift*. You will bless God, who hath appointed such a Day of holy Rest,—~~such~~ a Day of Relief from the toilsome Hurries and fatiguing Cares of Life,—a Day ordained for the very Purpose of raising our Thoughts and Affections towards that better World, for which we were created, and
to

to which the present Life is designed only as a Passage. And with grateful Hearts you will be ready to say to each other, *This is the Day, which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad therein.*

to which the present life is designed only
as a Passage. And with grateful Hearts
you will be ready to say to each other; This
is the Day, which the Lord hath made: we
will rejoice and be glad therein.